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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ENRG](#) [TRGY](#) [BEXP](#) [BTIO](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: MOROCCAN NUCLEAR ENERGY PLANS

REF: A. STATE 127423  
[1](#)B. RABAT 1109

[1](#)1. (SBU) In response to Ref A request for an overview of Morocco's nuclear energy plans, Post notes Ref B reporting discussions held during the November 16-18 visit to Morocco of Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, the Secretary's Special Envoy for Nuclear Nonproliferation. Ambassador Wolcott discussed Morocco's nuclear energy plans and preparations with the Minister of Energy, officials of Morocco's National Electricity Office (ONE), the Director of the National Center of Nuclear Energy, Sciences and Techniques (CNESTEN), and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. The Government of Morocco (GOM) believes that given Morocco's constraints (96 percent dependent on imported energy sources, with electricity consumption growing at 8 percent per year), nuclear power is nearly inevitable as a solution to its energy needs. For decades the Ministry of Energy and CNESTEN have been preparing the legal, regulatory and technical base that eventually will be required. ONE believes that nuclear energy would be cost-competitive with other sources of electricity in the near future and is preparing to issue a request for proposals for a nuclear power plant to be built and operated as an independent power producer (IPP) with a guaranteed purchase contract.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Regarding specific Ref A questions, much of Morocco's legal and regulatory framework for nuclear issues is currently in flux. Draft legislation dealing with nuclear technology and safety will (perhaps in 2009) revamp the decentralized regulatory responsibilities for matters involving nuclear materials and safety currently partitioned among the Ministries of Energy, Industry and Health, and will create a sole nuclear regulatory body. Ultimately, decisions on proceeding with nuclear power plants will lie with a national council on nuclear energy consisting of the Prime Minister, and the Ministers of Energy, Health, Industry, Agriculture, and Environment (the current Minister of Energy is also Minister of Environment).

[1](#)3. (SBU) As noted in Ref B, other countries (notably France) have also engaged the Government of Morocco in discussions on nuclear energy with an eye to commercial advocacy, but as yet Morocco has signed no agreements. Post recommends USTDA attention (such as an orientation visit to the U.S. of Moroccan officials) to ensure that any Moroccan decisions on civil nuclear energy benefit from exposure to U.S. technologies and suppliers.

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